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**WORLD LEARNING
COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS**

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***ANNUAL REPORT, YEAR 1
OCTOBER 1, 2012 – SEPTEMBER 30, 2013***

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I. WORLD LEARNING/DC ACTIVITY REPORT

Deliverables

World Learning submitted the **Monthly Reports (also called "Check books")** for the months of January through October, 2013. World Learning plans to continue to submit these monthly reports on the first day of each month, for each country (Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan). Due to the government of Turkmenistan declining to participate in the Community Connections Program, no check books were created for it.

World Learning submitted the **Program Monitoring and Evaluation Plan (PMEP)** and the **Annual Work Plan (AWP)** on November 19, 2012 and worked with the Mission to edit and adjust these plans over the course of the next four weeks. Final versions of the PMP and AWP are attached separately for reference purposes.

Host Organization Pre-Qualification Procurement

World Learning released a nationally distributed Community Connections Host Organization RFP as Stage 1 of the prequalification process for future approved Host Organizations. All interested respondents were asked to provide a detailed proposal that demonstrated their technical and organizational capability to host Community Connections programs.

The proposals were evaluated for content in the following areas:

Corporate Capabilities:

- Successful history of arranging professional training, seminars, and site visits
- Ranked list of organizational thematic capabilities
- Use of local resources, experts and facilitators in program implementation
- Effective action-planning systems and facilitators
- Examples of the use of program design tools such hands-on programming, use of case studies, and technical training methods
- Systems and processes used in program management, including preparing hosts and facilitators for program engagement

Host Families:

- Description of active home-stay network that would be utilized for CCP
- The systems in place for selecting and monitoring host families to ensure the involvement of qualified host families

Cultural, Community, and Volunteering Activities:

- Description and examples of community activities that involve visitors in community and American cultural activities, including examples of how activities were tailored to the participants and program themes
- Description and examples of incorporation of volunteer activities in programs. If this would be a new component for an offeror, the offeror was asked to provide a description of how the offeror would envision incorporating volunteer activities

Interpretation:

- Professional interpreters that offerors would seek to utilize in CCP

- The offeror's experience with and management of interpretation services

Monitoring:

- Program monitoring systems that the offeror has in place to ensure successful implementation, including the monitoring of home-stay placements

Program administration:

- Experience of offeror's staff and management that would contribute to them being a successful Host Organization
- Resumes of key program staff
- Board of Directors and/or volunteers who could contribute to the technical or organizational capabilities of the offeror

Regional Links:

- Relationships that the organization and/or community has to specified CCP countries

Logistics management:

- Experience in managing all the logistics of visitor exchange programs, including cultural activities, coordination of home-stays, arranging action planning sessions, airport meet and greet, local transportation, hotel arrangements, per diem disbursement, and medical emergencies

Lessons Learned:

- Lessons learned from hosting previous visitor exchange or other training programs

Twenty-nine offerors submitted their responses to the RFP, many of whom had been pre-qualified as Host Organizations and implemented CC programs under FORECAST I. Following a detailed review and ranking, 27 of the offerors were accepted as pre-qualified Host Organizations. World Learning has posted the RFP on its website and has a rolling-proposal acceptance policy for potential Host Organizations.

Host Organization Procurement

At the end of February, 2013 USAID submitted the list of approved themes for all six programs in three countries for FY2013 which included the following:

Kazakhstan:

1. PLHIV: Organizational Development to Address Stigma and Discrimination
2. Advancing Accountable Governance

Uzbekistan:

1. Capacity Building of Uzbekistan's National Tuberculosis Program
2. Introduction to the Adversarial System of Justice and/or Practical Implementation of Habeas Corpus

Tajikistan:

1. Community-Led Agriculture Development
2. Family Medicine

Of the above six programs, two traveled during Year 1: Tajikistan - *Community Led Agriculture Development* and Kazakhstan - *Persons Living with HIV: Organizational Development to Address Stigma and Discrimination*. The Tajikistan program was bid out to World Affairs Council of Oregon (WAC) in Portland and the Kazakhstan program went to WorldChicago.

Tajikistan Program

The Tajikistan program, hosted by WAC, provided the participants with a variety of trainings, meetings and discussions that covered multiple areas of agricultural development. Due to the professional diversity in the group, which included a hydro-specialist, an agricultural equipment engineer, government officials, owners of large farms, and NGO leaders, the participants were able to discuss each topic from their viewpoint at each meeting. Highlights from this program included the extended trip to the Oregon State University campus where the group joined a meeting of the heads of the Extension Service at their regular meeting. The chairwoman of OSU's Extension Services met with the group after the meeting to answer questions that were inspired by listening to the earlier discussions.

The group toured the large-animal veterinary clinic at OSU, as well as its seed labs, both of which were of keen interest to the group. In addition to the tours at OSU, the group conducted site visits to multiple farms of various sizes through the Portland-region, learning how different farmers approached their craft, new techniques and current issues for farmers.

Another significant highlight was the meeting with the Water Association; there was much discussion amongst the group about the importance of a smoothly functioning water association in Tajikistan.

A third, highly ranked appointment was with Headwaters Farm Incubator Program where participants learned about a program that assists new farmers, with a focus on soil and water conservation practices.

World Learning Program Officer, Deborah Waggoner, conducted a monitoring visit for this program and spent 5 days with the group in Oregon. She was able to observe the OSU visit, a fruitful action planning session, join the group for several farm visits, and spend time with the group on the bus asking each one for specific feedback on the program thus far.

Overall, the group was quite satisfied with their program experience, although they each recognized the challenge and opportunity presented to them with having such a diverse group of professionals.

The challenge was that not every meeting was directly applicable to everyone, but affected each one in some way (for example, the water association, the terms of which would affect everyone involved in agriculture, even if they are not directly involved in a water association in Tajikistan). The benefit to this diverse group was that the variety of perspectives and experiences enriched the discussions.

Kazakhstan Program

The Kazakhstan program, hosted by WorldChicago, in Chicago, Illinois was highly praised by both the primary interpreter and the staff at WorldChicago for being "one of the hardest working groups" they had ever worked with. The PHLIV group encountered some significant

health issues during their time on program, but the members of the group helped one another through the difficulties and remained focused on the program.

The participants created a group action plan, divided into manageable individual action plans, with the intent to tackle stigma and discrimination of PHLIV within each of their own spheres of influence, strengthened by an alliance between them and their organization.

Highlights from this group's program included a meeting with Illinois State Representative Greg Harris. Rep. Harris, who is openly living with HIV/AIDS and shared his experience as a leading advocate for HIV/AIDS issues in Illinois. The group was very interested in the fact that Rep. Harris was openly gay and HIV Positive when he campaigned for office and won.

The group also had valuable meetings with the City of Chicago Department of Health, the AIDS Legal Counsel of Chicago, and the Center on Halsted which provides comprehensive programs for PHLIV at all ages.

Participants noted that it was useful to see the American experience and model of how people work with drug users, LGBTQ, and others who are HIV positive. One participant noted, "It must be that a democratic society creates and allows for NGOs to work freely in the community to help PHLIV; this is not the case in all countries."

Both programs that traveled in FY13 concluded successfully, participated in re-entry seminars, and all participants should be working towards completing their action plans.

U.S. Cost Savings Measures

World Learning requires a 20% cost savings for each program from all Host Organizations. Many of them exceed this amount due to their excellent management of resources and strong partnerships in the communities.

Budget challenges are generally minimal. The only budget challenge faced are when infrequently used languages of interpretation are required, as with the Tajik program. Because there are few well qualified Tajik interpreters available the search for an interpreter was national and while there were additional costs for such expert interpreters World Learning and the Host Organization were able to negotiate lower daily rates and lower per diem rates.

Such challenges are not a normal part of program implementation, but when such adjustments are needed the HOs and World Learning work to reduce the overall financial impact on the program, as in this instance. Additional measures were taken by the Host Organization to reduce other costs and reduce the impact on the overall budget.

World Learning also strived to utilize small businesses during the reporting period and is pleased to report that it utilized a small business in Chicago to provide in-depth training workshops for the participants. For the FY14 year, it plans to utilize a small, woman-owned business as a Host Organization.

II. AMERICAN COUNCILS-FIELD OFFICE ACTIVITY REPORT

From September 2012 - February 2013 the Community Connections Program (CCP) staff had meetings with USAID/CAR and country offices as well as worked on the development of initial deliverables such as the Performance Monitoring Plan and Annual Work Plan. During this reporting period USAID sought approval for the program from the governments in Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, receiving approval in June from the Government of Uzbekistan and a negative response from the Government of Turkmenistan. Almaty-based Community Connections staff established procedures with local sub-contractors in Tashkent and Dushanbe.

The CCP staff under the guidance of USAID specialists developed a regional CCP brochure and banners for all three countries. CCP staff were also involved in revisions of the documents for exchange visitors. Templates from the 2006-2011 programs were used as samples and revised and approved by USAID in strict compliance with the newest rules and guidelines (for example, updated Security Risk and Fraud Procedures, forms for J-1 visa, and tax forms).

At the end of February 2013, USAID submitted the list of approved themes for Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan. From March-September 2013 upon receipt of program themes from USAID, the focus shifted from planning to program implementation. By the end of the first program year, two groups travelled to the U.S. and three more groups are scheduled to travel in October and early November. The first five program groups will participate in U.S. programs during the six month period from May 23 to November 24.

TAJIKISTAN

Summary of Cumulative Accomplishments for FY 2013

During the reporting period, one Community Connections Program group from Tajikistan travelled to the U.S. and took part in the Re-entry Workshop upon return. The second group was delayed somewhat due to a change of program theme and will travel during the first weeks of the second program year. In addition, recruitment for the third group from Tajikistan that will travel in January 2014, took place during the reporting period.

Community-Led Agriculture Development Program (May 23-June 16, 2013)

VERF development took place during the December 2012 visit to Dushanbe by Jessica Leonard and Rabiga Baytokova. The Feed the Future team and implementers from the Family Farming and Productive Agriculture programs provided valuable input for the VERF and recommended technical expert Tanzila Ergasheva to work with the group. While the role of the expert might vary slightly between groups, work with Ms. Ergasheva as the first program expert helped to define the role of the group technical expert in the program overall. The expert's responsibilities include participation in interviews, pre and post-program training on action planning for the group (PDO1 and Re-Entry Workshop), supporting the group in carrying out their action plans, and interviewing participants for the six-to-nine month survey.

Key program milestones included VERF approval on the January 24, PDO1 on April 24, PDO2 on May 22, and Re-Entry on July 19. The program was widely advertised, including radio announcements in the Tajik language in the target districts, presentations for 30 agricultural extension field staff of the Family Farming project, provision of application materials to staff of the Productive Agriculture, Farmer-to-Farmer, Modernizing Extension and Advisory Services,

and Mercy Corps projects, and a letter and subsequent meeting with the Deputy Minister of Agriculture. In addition, an information session was conducted in Kurgantube, regional center for Khatlon oblast. Forty (40) applications were submitted and the top 20 were selected for the interviews. Ten finalists and three alternates were identified by a selection committee which included the group expert, Jessica Leonard and USAID observers.

The group was hosted by World Affairs Council of Oregon (Portland). Participants were excited to have the opportunity to share their host family and professional program experiences at the Re-Entry Seminar in July. Two participants described significant actions taken during the month since their return. On June 19, Mastura Mamasaidova organized a field day to share what she learned in the U.S. In addition, she conducted training for her staff to prepare them to disseminate information materials which Ms. Mamasaidova gathered while in the U.S. Another participant, Nazira Safarova from the Regional Agriculture Department wrote a letter to the Minister of Agriculture describing the group's program which led to a visit to her office in Kurgantube by the Deputy Minister.

Ms. Safarova felt that the composition of the group, which included NGOs, government officials, and farmers, was very important to the success of the program. She included that note in her letter to the Deputy Minister who, in turn, noted in his meetings with assistance providers funded by other donor organizations that this kind of collaboration has great potential.

Family Medicine Program (October 7-26, 2013)

USAID staff and the USAID Quality Health program and counterparts (Tajikistan Association of Family Doctors, Medical University, and Post Graduate Institute) provided valuable input to the VERF for the program which was approved in May 2013. USAID also received permission from the Post Graduate Institute for Khuriya Khisomova to serve as the group expert. Ms. Khisomova is an excellent choice; she is a Community Connections alumna and a Family Medicine trainer.

Key program milestones include selection committee interviews July 17-18, PDO 1 on August 21, PDO2 on September 26, and departure on October 7. The program was advertised in *Asia Plus* newspaper and application materials were provided to the USAID Quality Health program, Ministry of Health, and the counterparts mentioned above. Forty-five (45) applications were submitted and the reading committee members selected the top 20 for interview. A selection committee consisting of Ms. Khisomova, Jessica Leonard and USAID observers selected ten finalists and three alternates.

PDO1 was a valuable experience for the participants. Ms. Khisomova's personal knowledge of the Community Connection's action planning process and experience as a Family Medicine trainer made the sessions especially effective. In addition, many of the participants are Family Medicine trainers and have some familiarity with SWOT and action planning which resulted in highly productive sessions. The group departed for the U.S. on October 7 and is hosted by World Services of Lacrosse, WI. The group spends the first program week in Baltimore, Maryland at a conference on family medicine and then is in La Crosse.

Primary Grade Reading Program (January 9-28, 2014)

USAID Tajikistan Country Office staff member Mavjuda Nabieva and USAID/CAR Education Office Marc Bonnenfant contributed to the VERF development for this program with the intent

of developing a team of champions for USAID's new primary reading program which began its activities in fall of 2013.

In addition to an advertisement in the *Asia Plus* newspaper, the Minister of Education and Teacher Retraining Institute received letters informing them about the program. Information sessions were conducted with USAID Quality Education Project staff and stakeholders who were asked to disseminate application materials. Twenty-seven (27) applications were submitted by the September 30th deadline.

Description of Progress against Planned Accomplishments in the Workplan and Report on Any Deviations

The first group, Community-Led Agriculture Development, progressed exactly as described in the calendar workplan. The second group was delayed somewhat due to USAID's decision to change the theme for the second group from Primary Reading to Family Medicine.

The Family Medicine group's departure was also postponed slightly to allow them to participate in a family medicine conference. This moved the departure into early October from the planned September date.

Description of Progress against Planned PMP Targets and Report on any Deviations

Progress in Tajikistan toward annual PMP targets is on track. Please see attached PMP Update.

Year-Based and Cumulative Local Sub-Contracting Disbursements, Results, and Pipelines

See attached table.

Progress in Coordination with Host Government, Other Donors, USAID-funded Projects, and Private Sector Partners

Government employees/participants in the Community-Led Agriculture and Family Medicine programs were able to travel without any problems. The Embassy has reported issues with last minute withdrawals by government officials. Therefore, CCP staff has ensured that appropriate government bodies have been informed early about program groups. Meetings and correspondence about both of the programs took place to inform the applicable ministries about the upcoming programs.

USAID-funded projects such as the Family Farming, Productive Agriculture, Farmer-to-Farmer, Quality Health, and Quality Reading Project have been active in the development of VERFs, disseminating program applications, and selecting participants. This has significantly contributed to the success of the programs.

Summary of Administrative/Staffing Issues for Tajikistan

Local partner Center for Municipal Development's (CMD) staff, Program Coordinator Gulru Azamova and Logistics Coordinator Aziza Ernazarova, have done an outstanding job which has contributed to smooth program implementation in Tajikistan. Almaty-based Community Connections Program Coordinator, Jessica Leonard, travelled to Dushanbe several times during the year for an initial meeting with USAID country office staff, interviews for the first and second programs, PDO1 for the first and second programs, PDO2 for the first program, and re-entry for the first program, and to provide guidance and support to CMD. Beginning with the second program, Family Medicine, Almaty-based staff will be present only for the interview

committee, PDO1 and re-entry events since CMD has the capacity to independently conduct PDO2.

Planned Main Activities for the Next Fiscal Year for Tajikistan

Follow-on activities for the first two groups will take place during the second program year. With the support of the group expert, alumni of the Community-Led Agriculture program are planning a series of presentations on their U.S. program in November 2013.

Ms. Ergasheva will also interview participants for the 6-9 Month Survey in January 2014 to gather information about progress on action plans and other program impact information required for the PMP.

A Re-entry Workshop for the Family Medicine Program will take place in early December to discuss participant follow-on plans. The group expert for that group will conduct the 6-9 Month Survey in summer of 2014.

In addition to the Family Medicine group which will travel in early October, two new groups are expected in 2014 with the first, Primary Grade Reading, already scheduled for January 2014. Work will begin on the VERF for a second group as soon as USAID proposes a theme for the group.

For the Primary Grade Reading group, interviews are scheduled for mid-November, followed by PDO1 in early December and PDO2 in early January. Re-Entry for this group will take place in early March and the 6-9 Month Survey will take place September 2014.

KAZAKHSTAN

Summary of Cumulative Accomplishments for FY 2013

During the reporting period, one Community Connections Program group from Kazakhstan travelled to the U.S. and took part in the Re-entry Workshop upon return. The second group is scheduled to travel in early November.

Persons Living with HIV: Organizational Development to Address Stigma and Discrimination (July 26-August 16, 2013)

The first Kazakhstan group consisted of representatives of organizations that work with persons living with HIV (PLHIV) and government health care providers from Almaty and Temirtau. USAID proposed Vitaliy Vinogradov as the group expert and he proved to be an excellent choice.

CCP staff wrote a letter to the Ministry of Health informing them of the program and requesting their assistance in identifying candidates. Information was also disseminated among the small number of organizations involved in work related to the theme in Almaty and Timirtau. Due to the limited number of individuals engaged in this programming area in Kazakhstan, only 16 applications were received for the program. USAID approved a waiver of the application reading committee stage.

All applicants were interviewed by Julia Beloslyudtseva and Mr. Vinogradov with USAID/CAR staff observing. Ten finalists and three alternates were selected and approved by USAID.

Key milestones for the program are as follows: PDO1 on June 7; PDO2 on July 25, and Re-entry Seminar on September 27, 2013.

At PDO1, group members asked USAID to include Mr. Vinogradov in the group. USAID approved this request. When one candidate declined participation, Mr. Vinogradov became the tenth finalist.

This group posed some special health and visa challenges. There were a number of individuals in the group who were HIV positive which meant that, despite the fact that they were all taking ARV Therapy, they were still at risk for illness that would be made more serious by the long flight and stress of being away from home. In addition, the primary risk group for HIV in Kazakhstan is injecting drug users which meant that it was likely that individuals with both previous drug use in their background and drug-related prison records would be among the participants. The Consulate requested an additional medical exam at an Embassy-approved clinic to confirm that the individuals who responded positively to the related questions on the DS-160 were no longer using drugs, and additional documentation of their prison record to confirm that they had served their sentences. One finalist was not willing to provide the additional documentation and undergo the additional exam and declined participation, however, all others succeeded in getting visas, though the visas were received very close to the departure date. The Community Connections Program covered the cost of the second medical exam for the participants to encourage them to take part in the program.

Participants provided valuable feedback on their host family and program experience during the Re-Entry Workshop. Even though the Re-Entry Workshop took place only one month after return from the program, some of the participants had already carried out some small scale activities (shared information on the study visit with their peers and stakeholders, conducted series of small seminars on new practices, established partnerships with business and media, fundraised for their organizations/communities).

Participants identified their goals and objectives for the post-program 6-9 months period and expressed their willingness to stay in touch with the CCP team and USAID/CAR. Under the group expert's leadership, the group plans to create an anti-stigma coalition, uniting civil society organizations (CSOs), state agencies, media, business companies and other interested parties. The coalition's name, mission, goals, objectives and anticipated results were discussed at the workshop.

An In-Country Follow-On VEF will be developed to fund costs to organize a meeting with stakeholders to present the idea of a coalition aimed at positive policy and behavior change for stigma and discrimination reduction in the country.

The group also discussed larger scale funding from Embassy resources for activities to follow the stakeholder meeting. In addition, several individual plans which were presented at the re-entry seminar, cover the ways to improve legal literacy of the target audience, raise awareness of medical workers on how to care for HIV patients, and decrease stigma and discrimination towards PLHIV in their local communities and society.

State Services Effective Evaluation and Quality Control (November 1-22, 2013)

The focus of this group is on quality assessment of state services. The participation in the program of representatives of state agencies, media, and civil society activists involved in evaluating the delivery of government services will contribute to the creation of a pilot model of effective partnership between various stakeholders in public services quality control and evaluation.

Design of the second VERF on evaluation of public services delivery (PSD) and quality control was launched in June 2013. Julia Beloslyudtseva organized a meeting with the key state body in the PSD sector in the country, the Kazakhstan Civil Service Agency, to ensure that the priorities of public service policy-makers were incorporated into the VERF. USAID and the U.S. Embassy in Astana also took part in this meeting. Interest in this topic is high at this time since a new law on public service was adopted in April 2013. The new law has resulted in the need to develop a methodology of PSD quality control and evaluation.

The program was advertised through the Civil Service Agency and to civil society groups active in evaluation of state services. Twenty applications were received for the program. USAID waived the reading committee stage and agreed that interviews would be arranged for all twenty applicants.

Interviews were conducted by the group expert Svetlana Ushakova, Director of the Institute for National and International Development Initiatives, and Julia Beloslyudtseva in Almaty and Astana. Ten (10) finalists and three alternates were approved by USAID for the program. Key milestones for the program during the reporting period are as follows: PDO1 was held in Astana on September 18. Ms. Ushakova led very productive sessions on SWOT-analysis, strategic and action planning. Participants demonstrated comprehensive knowledge in their professional areas and designed drafts of action plans to be realized during the post-program period.

Description of Progress against Planned Accomplishments in the work plan and Report on Any Deviations

Two programs were administered during the reporting period in Kazakhstan. In July and August, the first group traveled to the U.S. The second group will travel in early November.

Description of Progress against Planned PMP Targets and Report on any Deviations

Progress is on track against PMP targets. Please see attached PMP Update.

Year-Based and Cumulative Local Sub-Contracting Disbursements, Results, and Pipelines

See attached table.

Progress in Coordination with Host Government, Other Donors, USAID-funded Projects, and Private Sector Partners

Informational meetings with USAID implementing partners engaged in HIV/AIDS and experts from the Quality Health Care Project (QHC) provided valuable assistance and information on the current situation with HIV/AIDS in Kazakhstan, and informed CCP staff on the efforts undertaken by the QHC Project to fight and prevent the disease. This information was very helpful in developing the VERF.

For the second program on public services, Julia Beloslyudtseva, together with Rabiga Baytokova, COR for CCP, USAID/CAR, and Brian Duggan, Political/Economical Section, U.S. Embassy in Kazakhstan, had a productive meeting with Mr. Baimenov, the Chairman of the Agency for Civil Service Affairs on June 12. The heads of the departments involved in PSD monitoring and evaluation and one senior employee accompanied Mr. Baimenov to the meeting. Mr. Baimenov expressed his thanks to Ambassador Fairfax for the U.S. Embassy's support in organizing a regional Hub on Public Service and to USAID for the assistance provided in different developmental areas. Mr. Baimenov also stated that he is looking forward to expanding cooperation with USAID.

Rabiga Baytokova provided brief information about USAID in Kazakhstan and about the USAID Community Connections program. The Agency recommended that a Community Connections program focus on quality control and assessment of state services, including public service delivery. Mr. Baimenov designated two staff members to coordinate the design and selection of candidates.

Summary of Administrative/Staffing Issues

On September 2, Julia Beloslyudtseva gave notice that she would be leaving her position in early October. While her last day will be October 10, she will conduct PDO2 for the State Services group at the end of October and will be available to brief and orient the new staff person. Recruitment for a replacement is ongoing.

Planned Main Activities for the Next Fiscal Year for Kazakhstan

The PLHIV group will develop an In-Country VEF to cover its planned follow-on activity. In May 2014, the group expert will interview participants to collect information about program impact using the 6- 9 Month Survey instrument. PDO2 for the State Services program will take place in Astana on October 30.

Re-entry for the group is planned for mid-December. Group follow-on activities will take place in the spring of 2014 and the 6-9 Month Survey will be administered in August 2014. USAID/CAR will identify topics for the next FY in the coming months.

UZBEKISTAN

Summary of Cumulative Accomplishments for FY 2013

During the reporting period, one Community Connections Program group from Uzbekistan was planned. The group is scheduled to travel in early November.

Capacity Building of Uzbekistan's National Tuberculosis Program (November 4-24, 2013)

The first program VEF for Uzbekistan was approved in February 2013; however, a positive response to USAID's diplomatic note informing the Government of Uzbekistan about the USAID Community Connections program was not responded to by the Government of Uzbekistan until June which meant that the program was on hold until that approval was received.

Following the June approval, local partner Neo Consulting worked closely with the Ministry of Health and USAID to advertise and recruit for the program. The Ministry of Health provided contact information for distribution of applications to the applicable regions. Thirty (30)

applications were submitted. A reading committee including Mr. Alisher Ishanov from the Uzbekistan Country Office, Mr. Sidikov from the International Office of the Ministry of Health, and the group technical expert Gulnoza Izakova read the applications and selected the top 16 applicants for participation in interviews.

Interviews took place on August 22. In addition to the identification of ten finalists and two alternates for participation, Mr. Sidikov will join the group for a portion of the program as an observer. Community Connections will cover all costs related to Mr. Sidikov's trip. Mr. Ishanov from the Uzbekistan Country Office will also join the group as an observer.

The group unites representatives of scientific and policy-making agencies working in TB care sector and state tuberculosis (TB) health care providers from various regions of Uzbekistan. Finalists and alternates have a great deal of authority which suggests that there is a good chance that participant initiatives will be implemented upon return from the program. Participants possess extensive professional experience in TB care and managing TB care facilities, both at the national and regional levels.

Key milestones for the program include the following: PDO1 was organized on September 24. Participants together with technical expert Gulnoza Uzakova developed SWOT-analysis and designed draft action plans on the program theme. Rabiga Baytokova and Neo Consulting staff informed participants on necessary procedures and program logistics. The group will depart on November 4 and will be hosted by the Georgia Council for International Visitors in Atlanta.

Description of Progress against Planned Accomplishments in the Workplan and Report on Any Deviations

Departure of the Uzbekistan group was expected in summer. Program activities began much later due to the need to wait for the program approval by the Government of Uzbekistan. The workplan included an estimated departure date of June rather than the actual date of November.

Description of Progress against Planned PMP Targets and Report on any Deviations

No data to report for Uzbekistan; no groups travelled during reporting period.

Year-Based and Cumulative Local Sub-Contracting Disbursements, Results, and Pipelines

See attached table.

Progress in Coordination with Host Government, Other Donors, USAID-funded Projects, and Private Sector Partners

Since there have been last minute cancellations by government officials selected for participation in Embassy exchange programs, Public Affairs staff recommended that USAID meet with the appropriate ministry early in the planning stages to inform them about the program, invite them to distribute applications among eligible participants, and encourage the granting of approval of government participants when it is sought.

The potential candidates for the program were identified through limited competition.

CCP staff designed theme-specific information letters and application forms for the first Uzbek program, and USAID/Uzbek staff initiated distribution of applications and recruitment of participants.

Neo Consulting worked closely with USAID in approaching potential participants and distributing applications. Program implementation is highly dependent on Government approvals which often take considerable time. For example, even though the names of finalists and alternates were submitted to the MFA for review/approval after the selection was completed, three weeks before departure MFA informed that one finalist may not be allowed to take part because of work responsibilities.

The CCP team worked closely with Neo Consulting, providing technical assistance, advice on logistic procedures and document procedures, consulting on program issues (SWOT-analysis, action plans reporting, etc.), budget management and financial reporting. Neo Consulting is working hard to manage all program aspects in accordance with USAID guidelines, however they need significant support and assistance from American Councils CCP staff which is more challenging when carried out remotely.

Summary of Administrative/Staffing Issues

The Government of Uzbekistan responded positively to USAID's request to continue the Community Connections program in early June 2013. The Government's response to the USAID diplomatic note noted that the Government was ready to work with local partner Neo Consulting, however, they did not support visits to Uzbekistan by Kazakhstan-based Community Connections staff.

In early June, Neo Consulting signed their Community Connections sub agreement and the first payment for the approved program was transferred to their bank. They have since learned that they will need to apply to the Government Grant Committee which approves all grants from foreign organizations. Their previous understanding was that they would not need approval since they are a commercial organization and the agreement is a contract rather than a grant. Documents were submitted in September for Grant Committee review and a response was expected by October 20 (2-4 weeks is the standard period of review); however, the most recent information is that there will be no response until late October or the first half of November. Neo Consulting is covering program expenses from other funds at this time. The funds from the first payment remain in Neo's current bank. They have been told that it will be possible to transfer the funds to the National Bank upon approval by the Grant Committee. Grant funds from foreign grants can be kept only in the National Bank and one other bank approved for this purpose. Oloviddin Suyunov and Rustam Sapaev travelled to Almaty for training July 30-31. Community Connections staff reviewed the whole program cycle and program documents with Neo Consulting. They also met with Rabiga Baytokova to discuss next steps.

Planned Main Activities for the Next Fiscal Year for Uzbekistan

American Councils will work closely with USAID/UZ and Neo Consulting at all stages of the program. The TB Program group will depart for the U.S. on November 4. Re-Entry for the group will take place in January. Follow-on activities will take place in spring 2014 and the 6-9 Month Survey will be administered by Ms. Uzakova in September 2014. The next program themes will be identified by USAID/UCO in the near future.

Conclusion

In conclusion, World Learning, our partner American Councils in Kazakhstan, and the USAID Mission in Almaty are successfully collaborating to bring the Central Asian Republics Community Connections Programs to fruition.

World Learning appreciates the trust placed in us, and our partners, to fulfill the objectives and goals of USAID for Central Asia.

Sub-Contractor Disbursements Through September 2013

\$198,863.86 – Total amount disbursed to American Councils as of September 2013